

VZCZCXYZ0003
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #1744/01 3070602
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 030602Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6112

UNCLAS SEOUL 001744

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/K AND INL (JOHN LYLE)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KN](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: 2009-2010 ROK AND DPRK INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR)

REF: STATE 97309

¶1. (U) Per reftel, Embassy Seoul's submission for the Republic of Korea (ROK) portion of the 2009-2010 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) is provided in para 2. Input for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) portion of the INCSR is provided in para 3 with the understanding that information on the DPRK's narcotics-related activities is very limited.

¶2. (U) 2009-2010 INCSR input for the ROK:

¶I. Summary

Narcotics production or abuse is not a major problem in the Republic of Korea (ROK). Reports continue to indicate, however, that an undetermined quantity of narcotics is smuggled through South Korea en route to the United States and other countries. South Korea has become a transshipment location for drug traffickers, anomalously, due to the country's reputation for not having a drug abuse problem. This, combined with the fact that the South Korean port of Busan is one of the region's largest ports, makes South Korea an attractive location for illegal shipments coming from countries that are more likely to attract a contraband inspection upon arrival. Several large-scale diversions of dual-use precursor chemicals destined for Afghanistan were traced back to South Korea. The ROK is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

Drugs available in the ROK include methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and club drugs such as LSD and Ecstasy. Methamphetamine continues to be the most widely abused drug, while marijuana remains popular as well. Heroin and cocaine are only sporadically seen in the ROK. Club drugs such as Ecstasy and LSD continue to be popular among college students, and recent enforcement activities have caused some drug abusers to shift from methamphetamine to psychotropic substances. To discourage individuals from producing methamphetamine, the South Korean government controls the purchase of over-the-counter medicines containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, requiring customer registration for quantities greater than 720 mg (a three-day standard dose). At present, drug addiction appears limited to a relatively small-to-moderate portion of the Korean population, and a growing non-ethnic Korean population.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs 2009

Policy Initiatives. In 2009, the Korean Food and Drug Administration (KFDA) continued to implement stronger precursor chemical controls under amended legislation approved in 2005. The KFDA continued its efforts to educate companies and train its regulatory investigators on

the enhanced regulations and procedures for administering the precursor chemical program. In addition to existing regulatory oversight procedures to track and address diversion of narcotics and psychotropic substances from medical facilities, the ROK in 2008 strengthened the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Family Affairs' (MHWA) role in the treatment, protection, and study of drug addicts. MHWA now has three national rehabilitation treatment hospitals and 20 local district rehabilitation hospitals. In addition, the Korean Food and Drug Administration (KFDA) funds the Korean Association Against Drug Abuse (KAADA), a non-governmental organization dedicated to reducing drug-related risks and educating Koreans on the risks of drug abuse. In 2008, the ROK added benzylpiperazine to the list of narcotics and gamma butyrolactone (GBL) to the list of narcotic raw materials.

Law Enforcement Efforts. In the first six months of 2009, South Korean authorities arrested 3,806 individuals for narcotic violations, with most offenses being for methamphetamine and marijuana use. ROK authorities seized 9.1 kg of methamphetamine in the first half of 2009, an increase over the 7.1 kg seized in the first half of 2008. Ecstasy seizure figures were not available at the time of writing. South Korean authorities seized 17.7 kg of marijuana, which is an increase from the 14.5 kg seized during the first half of 2008. South Koreans generally do not use heroin; in the first half of 2009, 356 grams of heroin were seized, but the shipment was most likely in transit to another destination. Cocaine is used only sporadically, with no indication of its use increasing.

Corruption. There have been no reports of corruption

involving narcotics law enforcement in the ROK thus far in 2009. As a matter of government policy, the ROK does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions.

Agreements and Treaties. South Korea has extradition treaties with 23 countries and mutual legal assistance treaties in force with 18 countries, including the United States. South Korea is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention, as amended by its 1972 Protocol. In 2008, South Korea became a party to the UN Convention against Corruption; it has signed, but has not yet ratified, the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols. Korean authorities exchange information with international counternarcotics agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and have placed Korean National Police and/or Korea Customs Service attaches in Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, China, and the United States.

Cultivation/Production. Legal marijuana and hemp growth is licensed by local Health Departments. The hemp is used to produce fiber for traditional hand-made ceremonial funeral clothing. Every year, each District Prosecutor's Office, in conjunction with local governments, conducts surveillance into suspected illicit marijuana growing areas during planting or harvesting time periods to limit possible illicit diversion. In the first half of 2009, authorities seized 1,200 plants, a slight increase from 1,050 plants seized in the first half of 2008. Authorities have cracked down on several indoor home-growing marijuana cases in the past few months, most of which involved seeds purchased from the Netherlands through the internet and grown inside apartments.

Opium poppy production is illegal in South Korea, although poppy continues to be grown in Kyonggi Province where farmers have traditionally used the harvested plants as a folk medicine to treat sick pigs and cows. Opium is not normally processed from these plants for human consumption.

Korean authorities continue surveillance of opium poppy-growing areas. In the first half of 2009, 3,646 poppy plants were seized.

No methamphetamine laboratories were discovered in the ROK in the first six months of 2009. As a matter of reference, in 2007, there were only two clandestine laboratories discovered.

Drug Flow/Transit. Few narcotic drugs originate in South Korea. The export of narcotic substances is illegal under South Korean law and none are known to be exported. The ROK does export various precursor chemicals, however, including acetic anhydride, acetone, toluene, sulfuric acid and others. Transshipment through South Korea's ports remains a serious problem. ROK authorities recognize South Korea's vulnerability as a transshipment nexus and have undertaken greater efforts to educate shipping companies of the risk. ROK authorities' ability to directly intercept the suspected transshipment of narcotics and precursor chemicals has been limited by the fact that the vast majority of transiting shipping containers are never off-loaded and therefore do not pass through customs inspection. Nonetheless, the ROK continued its international cooperation efforts to monitor and investigate transshipment cases. Redoubled efforts by the Korea Customs Service (KCS) have resulted in increased seizures of methamphetamine and marijuana by arriving passengers and through postal services at South Korea's ports of entry. Most methamphetamine smuggled into South Korea comes from China. A majority of the LSD and Ecstasy used in South Korea has been identified as coming from North America or Europe. People living in metropolitan areas are known to use marijuana originating in South Africa and Nigeria, whereas those living in rural areas appear to obtain their marijuana from locally produced crops. ROK authorities also report increased instances of marijuana use among the foreign population in South Korea in recent years, a trend that is most likely the result of increased law enforcement efforts targeting this segment of the population.

Domestic programs/Demand Reduction. The Ministry of Health and Welfare Affairs conducts programs to treat drug addicts

at 24 hospitals nationwide. The treatment is free and patients can remain in the program for up to one year. The primary NGO involved with drug treatment is the Korean Association Against Drug Abuse (KAADA), which is funded by both the government and private donations and has twelve branches throughout the country. Serving approximately 300 patients annually, KAADA provides education on the risks and dangers of drugs, as well as counseling, sports therapy and Narcotics Anonymous programs. Convicted drug users and traffickers may have their indictment/sentencing delayed or suspended in return for spending up to six months at one of the centers. KAADA also runs television and radio ad campaigns to stop the spread of drug abuse among Korean youth. Beginning in 2009, the national curriculum for elementary to high school students has been expanded to include courses on health, of which one segment is devoted to anti-drug education. KAADA provides former addicts and experts to speak to students about the dangers of drug use. Among the biggest challenges to reducing drug use, according to KAADA, is the ease of buying drugs online, particularly those disguised as diet pills, which lure even unsuspecting consumers into beginning the cycle of drug addiction.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

Policy Initiatives and Programs. The U.S. Embassy's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Seoul Country Office and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials work closely with ROK narcotics law enforcement

authorities. Both the DEA and ICE consider their working relationships to be excellent.

Bilateral Cooperation. The DEA Seoul Country Office has focused its efforts on international drug interdiction, seizures of funds and assets related to illicit narcotics trafficking (in collaboration with ICE), and the diversion of precursor chemicals in South Korea and in the Far East region. In addition to meeting with high-level officials from multiple agencies on a regular basis, the DEA Seoul Country Office collaborates with the ROK in international fora. For example, DEA played an important role in the success of the Anti-drug Liaison Officials' Meeting for International Cooperation (ADLOMICO), held in Busan in September 2009, which was attended by 175 representatives from 22 countries, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ASEAN and INTERPOL. The objectives of the meeting were to promote international cooperation in the fight against drugs/precursors trafficking, and to exchange information on drug trends, trafficking routes, new tools and techniques to tackle global illicit drug problems. The DEA Seoul Country Office continues to share intelligence regarding the importation of precursor chemicals into South Korea from the United States and other Asian countries with the KFDA, KCS, the Korean Supreme Prosecutors' Office (KSPO), and the Korean National Intelligence Service (KNIS). DEA also works closely with the KSPO and KCS in their activities to monitor airport and drug transshipment methods and trends, including the use of international mail by drug traffickers. The USCG works with the Korean Coast Guard, mainly through the multilateral North Pacific Coast Guard Forum. Activities through this forum focus on the interdiction of maritime threats, including the smuggling of illegal drugs, in the North Pacific region.

The Road Ahead. ROK authorities have expressed concern that the popularity of South Korea as a transshipment nexus may lead to a greater volume of drugs entering Korean markets. Korean authorities fear increased accessibility and lower prices could stimulate domestic drug use in the future. South Korean authorities also indicate a growing concern about the importation of narcotics, psychotropic drugs, and illegal medicines purchased via the internet, predominately from web sites maintained in the United States. In response, Korean authorities established a Memorandum of Understanding with a number of Korean internet portal sites to allow the KNPA to track and intercept such purchases. The South Korean government is currently seeking further international cooperation to better navigate the legal complexities surrounding the prosecution of transnational cyber crimes. The DEA Seoul Country Office will continue its extensive training, mentoring, and operational cooperation with ROK authorities.

Chemical Control. As of 2009, 25 precursor chemicals are controlled by Korean authorities. Both the Korean Customs Service (KCS) and The Korean Food and Drug Administration (KFDA) participate in Projects Cohesion and Prism. In addition, the KCS, KFDA and other Korean law enforcement agencies, such as the Korean National Police, participate in sub-programs of those projects, such as Data and

Intelligence Collection (DICE) and the Information Sharing System (ISS). The KFDA closely monitors imports and exports of precursor chemicals, particularly acetic anhydride, and investigates shipments suspected of being diverted for illicit purposes. Permits must be obtained for such shipments and records of transactions are maintained for a minimum of two years. The KFDA works with governments of several Southeast Asian nations to verify documents and confirm the existence of importing businesses, and sends representatives to the region to investigate. A bill soon to be proposed in the National Assembly will require manufacturers and exporters of precursor chemicals to register with the government, and will also provide education to Korean businesses to prevent them from unknowingly exporting such chemicals to bogus importers.

The DEA Seoul Country Office and ROK authorities have jointly investigated numerous shipments, constituting multiple tons of acetic anhydride manufactured and imported from the U.S., that have been illegally exported. Other precursor chemicals, including acetone, toluene, hydrochloric acid and sulfuric acid, are produced in large quantities within the ROK for in-country use and for export. In a recent notable case from September 2009, prosecutors arrested a Korean suspect who allegedly attempted to smuggle 10 tons of acetic anhydride to Afghanistan through Pakistani agents. The acetic anhydride, transported under the guise of dyeing agents, was enough to manufacture heroin for 10 million people, according to a press release published by the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office. The office said the suspect had become involved in a Pakistani gang and had already successfully shipped 6.6 tons of acetic anhydride to Afghanistan in February.

13. (U) 2009-1010 INCSR input for the DPRK:

According to various ROK open source materials, defectors from North Korea have indicated that crystal methamphetamine, called bing-doo (meaning "ice poison") in North Korea, is manufactured at the Heung-nam Pharmaceutical Company in Ham-heung City, North Korea. Heroin, called white bellflower or morphine, is manufactured in a factory, formerly named Ra-nam Pharmaceutical Company, located near Pyongyang. Based on open-source information, there are approximately 500,000 drug abusers in North Korea. One kilogram of crystal methamphetamine is sold at USD 15,000-17,000, while one kilogram of heroin is sold at USD 60,000-70,000.

STEPHENS